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THE RELIGIOUS STANDPOINT OF THE CHRONICLER.

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Since the time of de Wette it has been the custom of advanced critics of the Old Testament to treat Chronicles as a work beneath the notice of the historian. Thus Stade in his history of Israel gives "die Chronik keine Quelle" as the headline of the pages in which he treats of this book. Wellhausen, again, declares (*Prolegomena*, p. 231) that the existence of pre-exilic traditions in Chronicles is out of the question. Unsupported statements of the chronicler are put down as *Tendenz*-fictions by the modern advanced critic. It becomes all-important, therefore, to enquire into the nature and extent of this *Tendenz*. A statement of the facts will enable us to judge for ourselves whether it goes far enough to invalidate of itself the chronicler's testimony.

1. In the first place we notice in the work of the chronicler a deepened awe (which some may regard, if they will, as superstitious) in speaking of God and of his working in the world. Such an awe may be observed in Samuel and Kings, but it deepens in the language of Chronicles. The chronicler is above all *εὐλαβής*.

Thus we find in his book a more sparing use of the divine name. We read, for instance, "the ark of God" and "the house of God," where in the earlier histories we should find "the ark of the Lord" and "the house of the Lord."

This *εὐλάβεια* of the chronicler may be also illustrated from the language which he uses or records of the temple. Many, no doubt, of the careful and guarded expressions applied in Chronicles to the temple to describe it as the house of the Lord are found already in Kings, but the chronicler makes them his own and adds fresh ones to them. Thus we find the language of 1 Kgs. 8:27 recorded again with one small emphasizing variation in 2 Chron. 6:18, "But will God indeed dwell (Chronicles, "—with men") on the earth? Behold the heavens and the heaven of

heavens contain thee not; how much less this house that I have builded?" On the other hand there is no parallel in Kings for the striking words of Solomon's letter to Hiram (2 Chron. 2:6), "Who am I then, that I should build Him an house, save only to burn incense before Him?"

Thus we see clearly expressed in Kings and emphasized in Chronicles the desire to ward off the notion that God dwells in *temples made with hands*. If it should appear later that the temple and the temple service are unduly prominent in the history as the chronicler narrates it, let it be remembered that no one could recognize more plainly than he that the God who sanctified the temple is greater than the temple.

Again, it is most probable that the *εὐλάβεια* of the chronicler supplies the explanation of the difference between the two following passages:

1 Chron. 21:1.	2 Sam. 24:1.
"And Satan (שָׂטָן) stood (continued to stand) against Israel and he moved David to number Israel."	"And the anger of the Lord burnt again against Israel and he moved David against them, saying, Go, number Israel and Judah."

2. In estimating the religious standpoint of the chronicler we must also notice the very great importance which attaches in his eyes to the temple and its furniture. These seem to be continually in his thoughts. Thus in 2 Sam. 8:8 we are briefly told that David in his campaign against Hadad- (Hadar-) ezer took much "brass," and in vs. 10, 11 that he "dedicated to the Lord" certain vessels of "brass," silver and gold. The chronicler is much more explicit. At the mention of this brass (1 Chron. 18:8) he adds, "wherewith Solomon made the brazen sea, and the pillars, and the vessels of brass."

Again (1 Chron. 22:1) we are told that David at his sacrifice at Ornan's threshing-floor chose the floor for the site of the temple. There is no similar statement in Samuel or Kings.

But the most striking illustration of the chronicler's estimation of the temple is afforded by the contents of the last few

chapters of 1 Chronicles. Here we are told that David gathered money, and building materials, and workmen; that he made arrangements for the necessary changes in the organization of the Levites when they should become attached to a building and separated from a moving tabernacle; that he assembled the whole people and invited gifts for the building; that finally he gave Solomon a plan of each part of the temple (1 Chron. 28:11, 12).

Moreover, divine guidance is claimed in Chronicles for the temple plan with which David supplied Solomon. The simplest translation of 1 Chron. 28:12 (see, however, Bertheau) is, "And the pattern of all which *by the Spirit* was with him, even of the courts of the house, etc." There seems to be a slight contrast between the two words in *ברוח עמו*, and the phrase probably stands for *ברוח עם לבבו*. The pattern of the parts of the house was present with David's heart (*i. e.*, his mind) by the help of the Spirit.

It is again worthy of notice that the chronicler dwells upon the free-will offerings made by the great men of Israel towards the building of the temple (1 Chron. 29). Of these offerings the writer in Kings says nothing.

Again (2 Chron. 20:8, 9), we have allusions in Jehoshaphat's prayer against the confederates to the building of the temple and to Solomon's prayer at the dedication.

Finally, two peculiarities of language are worthy of attention in this connexion:

(a) The name of the shrine of the temple, called in Kings "the oracle" (or possibly "the hinder part," *דביר*) is called by the chronicler the "Holy of Holies" (*קדש הקדשים*).

(b) The sin of the princes of Judah under Joash is described in the words, "They forsook *the House of the Lord*" (2 Chron. 24:18).

3. We must also notice the chronicler's attitude towards ritual. The temple is not a mere palladium to him; it is the place in which the God of Israel is praised and blessed in psalms, and worshiped with burnt offerings and incense. To turn from the preaching of Isaiah to the narrative of the chronicler seems like passing into a new world.

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" asks the prophet in the name of the Lord (Isa. 1:11).

"They offered burnt offerings," writes the chronicler, . . . "even 1000 bullocks, 1000 rams, and 1000 lambs" (1 Chron. 29:21).

"Incense is an abomination unto me," the prophet cries.

"[The sons of Aaron]" says Abijah proudly, "burn unto the Lord every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense" (2 Chron. 13:10, 11).

"Your appointed feasts my soul hateth," the prophet dares to say.

The chronicler writes with a thrill of joy, "There was no pass-over like to it kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet" (2 Chron. 35:18).

It must be allowed at once that the actual gulf between Isaiah and the chronicler is not so deep as it seems. Isaiah's words must be interpreted in the light thrown by the context, "I cannot away with *iniquity and the solemn meeting* [conjoined]." On the other hand, it must not be assumed that in the view of the chronicler the outward services of the temple covered the whole field of religion. It is he who records David's charge to Solomon to serve the Lord with a perfect heart and *with a willing affection* (בנפש חפצה). Further, it is the chronicler only who records Jehoshaphat's noble charge to his newly appointed judges,* "Ye judge not for man, but for the Lord . . . take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts" (2 Chron. 19:6, 7).

Again, no man who cared only for the externals of religion could have recorded with approval that many of Ephraim were allowed to eat of the Passover although they were not ceremonially clean, or could have defended the permission on the ground that the king (and not the high priest) had prayed for them (2 Chron. 30:18-20. No parallel in Kings).

4. Moreover, to understand the religious standpoint of the chronicler we must take into account his attitude towards the Northern Kingdom. At first sight it seems to be identical with that of the compiler of Kings. This writer records the words of Shemaiah the man of God *that the disruption was of God* (1 Kgs.

* Wellhausen (*Proleg.*, pp. 198, 199) doubts the *fact* of appointment.

12:24), and the chronicler repeats the statement (2 Chron. 11:4). Again, the compiler of Kings in his summaries passes an unfavorable judgment on every one of the kings of Israel; they all "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord" (even Jehu, 2 Kgs. 10:29-31), and in this unfavorable judgment he is wholly in agreement with the chronicler.

Yet there seems to be a real divergence of view as to the *theory* of the Northern Kingdom. The earlier historian sees nothing wrong in it. As the disruption was *of God*, so the continuation of it is not necessarily contrary to his will. Accordingly the author of Kings records the elevation of Jehu as the work of a prophet of the Lord. The chronicler's view is apparently different. The continued schism of Israel is a sin against God. *The kingdom was given to David over Israel, to him and to his sons forever by a covenant of salt* (2 Chron. 13:5. The speech of Abijah). *The Lord is not with Israel, to wit, with all the children of Ephraim* (2 Chron. 25:7. A prophet to Amaziah). The chronicler even shows a tendency to call the Southern Kingdom "Israel," as though that were the true Israel, and as though the ten tribes were wholly cast off by the Lord (2 Chron. 12:6; 21:2-4 and 28:19, 27). "Sie (die zehn Stämme)," to use the words of Wellhausen (*Prolegomena*, p. 197), "kommen darum *wie andere Heiden* nur so weit für die heilige Geschichte in Betracht, als sie mit dem eigentlichen Volke Jahve's dem Israel im Lande Juda (2 Chron. 23:2), in freundliche oder feindliche Berührung treten."

5. The chronicler's views as to suffering, punishment, and sin differ little from those of the other Old Testament writers, the writer of the Book of Job excepted. All the prophets teach that sin is followed by temporal suffering as a punishment for sin. Nay, further, the converse may at least generally be said to be the doctrine of the seers, viz., that temporal calamity is to be regarded as a punishment for ill-doing. "Shall evil befall a city," asks Amos (3:6), "and the Lord hath not done it?" Jeremiah (14:1-10) declares that the dearth in Judah is a recompense for iniquity. Malachi (3:9), alluding to a similar calamity, says, "Ye are cursed with a curse; *for ye have robbed me*, even this whole nation."

In Chronicles this prophetic teaching is emphasized and illustrated. No sermon on the text, "Evil deed hath evil seed," could be more complete than the story of the death of Zechariah (2 Chron. 24:20-25). The prophet rebukes the people for forsaking the Lord, a conspiracy of people and king is made against him, he is stoned, and his dying words are, "The Lord see and require!" A year later a small Syrian army overthrows Judah, and makes a slaughter of the leaders of the people and of the people themselves. Joash himself escapes for the moment, suffering from many wounds, but finally dies through conspiracy. The story of Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:16-20) is equally complete as an illustration of temporal punishment following upon sin. His heart lifts him up, he takes a priestly function upon himself, he stands in the temple wrathful at remonstrance, and leprosy, "the stroke of God," breaks forth in his forehead as he holds the censer in his hand.

The doctrine as held by the chronicler seems to us cruder and harsher, more mechanical and less spiritual, perhaps, than as held by the prophets, and yet the doctrine in whatever form held is a truth which no true historian may neglect. If a writer is sometimes misled by it to pass uncharitable judgments, at others it leads him to coördinate facts, on the coördination of which the truth of the narrative as a whole depends.

In summing up our impressions of the religious standpoint of the chronicler, we are bound to confess that there is no bias discernible which is of itself fatal to his claim to be considered among the authorities for the history of Israel. The circumstance that he records facts which fall in with his own view of cause and effect but are not recorded in the parallel narratives of earlier historians does not prove that he invented the facts, or that he took them from some like-minded author only a little earlier in date than himself. To reject every unsupported statement in Chronicles which agrees with the chronicler's *Tendenz* would be to cherish a *Tendenz* of one's own. A narrative in Chronicles may agree with the chronicler's bias, may even agree with it in more than one of its aspects, it may be unsupported by anything in Samuel or Kings, may even be contradicted by a parallel statement of earlier date, and yet it may contain information too precious to

lose. For (let the truth be confessed!) the author of Kings also has his *Tendenz*. He tells that the revolt of the ten tribes came of Jehovah; he records the disastrous fall of the prophet who came from Judah to cry against Jeroboam's altar; he almost ignores the history of the Southern Kingdom for two centuries; he exalts the northern prophets Elijah and Elisha; he gives the taunting proverb in which the king of Israel appears as a cedar and the king of Judah as a thistle. In some cases, at least, the *Tendenz* of the author of Kings has to be weighed against the *Tendenz* of the chronicler, and it will seem to some investigators that the truth lies between them.